



TOWN HALL  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

**AMHERST MUNICIPAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST**

Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller  
4 Boltwood Ave.  
Town of Amherst  
Amherst, MA 01002

Ms. Aldrich:

In response to your questions regarding the Trust’s request for \$150,000 in Community Preservation funds, please find the following response:

- *Last year \$25,000 was approved. How have these funds been used?*

Since the AMAHT was awarded the funds in May, the Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (AMAHT) has expended the following funds:

Atty. Kathleen O’Donnell	\$500
Meet with the AMAHT and prepared the Declaration of Trust for filing at the Hampshire County registry of Deeds	

Jennifer Goldson, JM Goldson community preservation + planning	\$9,600
Contract for services to assist with Strategic Plan, initial meeting 1.12.16	

Remaining anticipated expenses in FY 2016:

Site and Building Feasibility for surplus town property:	\$10,000- \$15,000
East Street School, Old Farm Road, Other private properties	

- *Please provide more information on how this \$150,000 will be used. How will it result in new affordable units?*

The AMAHT is officially responsible for preserving and developing affordable housing in the Town of Amherst. With the creation of the AMAHT, the Town will not be limited to waiting for developers to come forward with worthwhile affordable housing projects. The Town now has an active agent to seek out and promote affordable housing opportunities. To fulfill this mandate, the AMAHT needs a capital fund that will fill funding gaps in affordable housing development projects and

allow the AMAHT to aggressively promote preservation and development of affordable housing so that town's housing needs and values can be realized. Developing affordable housing opportunities, whether through rehabilitation and preservation (i.e. Rolling Green Apartments) or through new development (i.e. Olympia Oaks), cost several millions of dollars, necessitating multiple funding sources. The AMAHT envisions a multi-year process of raising funds to a level required to initiate affordable housing projects and encourage developers to join in the undertaking. During this period of creating a capital fund, the AMAHT is prepared to act on opportunities that might present themselves, including the use of Town land, partnering with other groups and/or development entities and working with private property owners and private developers. The goal is to increase housing options for Amherst's low- and moderate-income residents, including the development of new affordable housing units.

- *What can the Trust tell the CPA committee regarding the strategies the Trust intends to implement for the creation of affordable housing? Will it be new housing or conversion of existing to housing stock? Rental housing or home ownership?*
- *What populations do you anticipate your projects will serve?*

The Trust's priorities are guided by the extensive research and public comments that resulted in the Amherst Master Plan, the Amherst Housing Production Plan and the RKG Housing Market Study. Those plans identify several significant gaps in housing affordability in the following areas:

#### From the Amherst Master Plan

- *Encourage a greater mix of housing types, sizes, and prices serving a wider range of income levels than is currently available throughout Amherst. Encourage the development of economically diverse neighborhoods.*
- *Preserve and expand the number of affordable and moderately priced rental units and housing stock.*
- *Increase the opportunity for infill development and the location of housing developments near services.*
- *Encourage the production of housing in an environmentally sound manner with respect to design, siting, materials and resource use.*
- *Encourage housing that meets the needs of special populations.*
- *Improve housing and services for people in the area who are homeless.*
- *Support the creation of taxable student housing that will lessen the pressures on residential neighborhoods.*
- *Build and sustain the Town's capacity for regulatory oversight for Amherst's housing stock, and pursue ways to enhance security.*

#### From the Amherst Housing Production Plan

- ***Rental housing for families***  
*There is a substantial need to house families, particularly those earning within very low income, including smaller, single-parent households*
- ***Rental housing for individuals***

- *for low-wage individuals encountering serious difficulty finding housing that they can afford*
  - *for individuals with disabilities.*
  - *for adult children who were raised locally and want to return to Amherst,*
  - *for older adults on fixed income without children*
  - *for the homeless*
  - *for recent, low-wage immigrants working in local businesses*
- **Preservation of the existing affordable rental stock**
    - *The preservation of existing affordable rental units is essential to maintaining an affordable housing stock well into the future.*
- **Affordable homeownership for families**
    - *Infill development and the redevelopment/reuse of existing properties in partnership with non-profit organizations and private builders*
- **Housing for at risk and special needs populations**
    - *Housing should continue to be developed to serve those who are at risk of homelessness and/or have special needs that require supportive services. Providing stable and affordable opportunities for those transitioning out of shelters or special programs remains a high priority.*

Table 2-40  
Unmet Housing Needs in Amherst

Population in Need	Housing Available	Unmet Need*	Recommended in HPP For Next Five Years**
Extremely Low Income (Within 30% AMI)	2,490	1,970 (about 1,500 are likely students)	200 units (rentals) or 83% of annual production goal of 48 units over 5 years
Very Low Income (30% to 50% AMI)	1,190	505	
Low to Moderate Income (50% to 80% AMI)	1,050	575	40 (homeownership)
Families***	3,430	870	150
Seniors***	1,860	830	50
People with Disabilities***	72 (MassAccess) + est. 100 other units+ 81 DDS units = 253	2,200	25
Homeless***	18 beds at Craigs Place + 8 units at Jessie's House	15	Part of the 200 units listed above

Sources: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), SOCDs CHAS Data, 2009, MassAccess, and Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, August 28, 2012.

\* Includes all those spending too much on their housing. \*\* Based on five-year production goals that total 48 units/year. \*\*\* These population groups are also largely incorporated in the numbers of those with unmet housing needs earning at extremely low and very low income levels. The 2,200 unmet need is based on total number  
laiming a disability minus units that are handicapped accessible and/or have supportive services.

To help prioritize those areas for those most in need, the Trust will be consulting closely with the Amherst Housing and Shelter Committee, the Amherst Housing Authority, the Amherst Community Land Trust, Craig's Door, the Interfaith Housing Corporation, Amherst Community Connections, Habitat for Humanity, Valley CDC, HAPHousing, the Veterans Administration, the Massachusetts Housing Partnership and others.

- *What partners do you anticipate working with?*

In addition to those developers identified above, we will solicit proposals from experienced developers of affordable housing. These include larger firms like The Community Builders, Winn Development, and Beacon, as well as smaller firms like First Resource, O'Connell, and Soldier On. We can also encourage local housing developers to partner with affordable housing professionals on some projects.

- *Is the Amherst Municipal Housing Trust developing plans to address housing for chronically homeless people?*

The chronically homeless have clearly been identified as a group urgently in need of affordable housing. In keeping with our mandate, we will be exploring what opportunities may be available to help this vulnerable population.

- *When will strategic plan be completed? How would it impact your work to delay this request until the strategic plan is in place?*

The current schedule anticipates a final Plan to be adopted in June 2016.

- *How much CPA funding will be needed in future years?*

The need for a ready source of capital outside of the annual CPA granting schedule and the large amount of accumulated capital needed to seed any significant affordable housing initiative, will likely lead to annual requests. The CPA has been identified state-wide as one of the primary funding sources for municipal affordable trusts.

- *What other sources of funds are you pursuing?*

The AMAHT has received a committed of \$20,000 from Interfaith Housing Corporation (see attached letter).

The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) a state-wide quasi-public housing organization has agreed to provide technical assistance to the Trust which can include funding for third party professionals to assist in site and project feasibility. (See attached letter.)

The AMAHT will be pursuing an application to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for Planning Assistance Toward

Housing (PATH) funds. This program is designed to increase the supply of multi-family housing for a range of incomes by assisting communities with community-based planning activities that will lead directly to housing production. Communities may apply for up to \$25,000 in funding. Initial inquiries received a positive response, indicating adequate funding available for a Spring 2016 award of funds.